

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0078

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: SHUM PDEV PGOV LA PORS
SUBJECT: LPDR ARRESTS HIGH RANKING COMMERCE MINISTRY OFFICIALS
FOR CORRUPTION

REF: A VIENTIANE A-15, MARCH 31, 1977, UV 77 VIENTIANE 1663,
C 77 VIENTIANE 1552

1. A RELIABLE LAO SOURCE SAID THAT FOUR HIGH RANKING
OFFICIALS IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY WERE
ARRESTED JANUARY 16 AND WERE CHARGED WITH CORRUPTION.
ALL FOUR WERE DESCRIBED AS "OLD PATHET LAO" AND HAD
ONLY RECENTLY COME TO VIENTIANE AFTER SPENDING MOST OF
THEIR LIVES IN SAM NEUA. THE FOUR WERE THIT THAN
SENSOUK, DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE
AND INDUSTRY; THONGSOUK, DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY'S
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR COMMERCE; SIENGPHENG, DIRECTOR
OF THE MINISTRY'S DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY; AND KHAMLEK,
ASSISTANT TO THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.
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THE SOURCE SAID THAT THE FOUR HAD BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF
A SERIOUS CRIME OF THE SECOND DEGREE AND WOULD BE IM-
PRISONED FOR LIFE. THE SOURCE SAID THAT THE FOUR
ACCUSED HAD BEEN FOUND GUILTY UNDER A RECENTLY APPROVED
ORDER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE OUTLINING THE
LEGAL PRINCIPALS FOR THE LPDR.

2. THE ORDER WAS MENTIONED IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION DAILY BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 28, 1977, WHICH REPORTED THE OPENING OF A SEMINAR THREE DAYS EARLIER FOR JUDGES REPRESENTING ALL OF THE LPDR PROVINCES. THE LAO SOURCE TOLD US JANUARY 17, 1978, THAT THE HIGH RANKING JUDGES WERE DISCUSSING THE ORDER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S COUNCIL. UNDER THIS NEWLY FORMULATED SYSTEM, THE SOURCE SAID, CRIMES OF THE MOST SERIOUS NATURE, SUCH AS ASSASSINATING OR ATTEMPTING TO ASSASSINATE GOVERNMENT LEADERS, WOULD BE PUNISHED BY DEATH. CRIMES OF THE NEXT DEGREE OF SERIOUSNESS, SUCH AS PLOTTING THE OVERTHROW OR UNDERMINING THE GOVERNMENT, WOULD BE PUNISHABLE BY LIFE IMPRISONMENT. CRIMES OF THE THIRD DEGREE RANGED FROM COMMON CRIMINAL ACTIVITY TO THE DEMONSTRATION OF POLITICALLY IMPURE THOUGHTS. THOSE JAILED FOR CRIMES OF THE THIRD CATEGORY COULD APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE'S COURTS FOR RELEASE.

3. THE SOURCE SAID THAT THE PEOPLE'S COURTS ONLY CONVENED TO HEAR CRIMES OF A SERIOUS NATURE AND WERE COMPOSED OF AN OFFICIAL FROM THE DISTRICT LEVEL, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE WORKERS' ASSOCIATION AT THE ACCSED'S PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT AND A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE LAO WOMEN'S PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION AND LAO PATRIOTIC YOUTH ASSOCIATION. (SEE REF A FOR A MORE COMPLETE DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE LAO LEGAL SYSTEM.)
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4. COMMENT: BY ARRESTING HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS WITH LONG EXPERIENCE WITH THE PATHET LAO, THE LPDR HAS MADE SOME EFFORT TO CONTROL CRIME AND CORRUPTION. PERIODIC ARREST CAMPAIGNS THAT IMPRISON HUNDREDS OF COMMON CITIZENS WITHOUT CHARGES (REFS B, C) DEMONSTRATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME COMMITMENT TO FURTHERING JUSTICE AS WE KNOW IT.
ROBERTS

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